Biased Language

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Abstract

Biased language appears in our everyday conversations and other means of communication. People blindly associate terms to specific genders when, in reality, it could be linked with either gender. Myriad amounts of terms with the same meanings populate this world, yet, only certain words are paired up with specific genders. Additionally, through the way humans communicate through body movements and postures, one can tell without looking at someone’s face, or by previously knowing their gender, whether it is a male or a female who is communicating. There are many remedies to cure the biases language encounters, but it is up to speakers and writers to terminate exemptions of certain words or terms to be associated with the gender it is not used to being associated with.

*Keywords:* dominate, gentle, gender-neutral

Specific words are inevitably associated with only one sex; whether it be “beautiful” or “handsome,” it is easy to link a certain adjective with its respective noun. Language acts as merely a tool in order to communicate that builds and maintains relationships; meanwhile, it seems to serve as a barrier in today’s times due to its lack of expansion among the sexes. From the lack of using words to describe specific genders, to the way humans portray themselves through body language, it is no secret that genders have their differences. Nonetheless, this does not mean language has to suffer the separation as the genders do. Through the ways that writers and speakers associate certain terms or phrases with an exact sex, it shows language’s biases; nevertheless, there are many ways to clear up the biased language world –with the main cure being to not discriminate words with lesser used gender associations. Over the years, language has been modified to form words into gender-specific sentences. Depicted through people’s everyday conversations, it is clear to see that certain words will just not be associated with a designated sex. For example, it is no surprise the term handsome is associated with an attractive man. However, due to the term’s constant association with a male figure, it is seldom that the term is ever associated with an attractive female because, rather, she has her own terms to distinguish herself –such as pretty. Again, due to pretty’s constant emphasis being on a female’s appearances, it is peculiar to hear someone call a good-looking man pretty. Through these examples and more, it is easy to see how certain terms are undoubtedly associated with solely one sex due to its constant emphasis on just that specific sex. **By the way speakers and writers associate terms with specific genders, it can be difficult to steer away from that general norm.**

Language can appear in many forms –one of which people portray every day: body language. Studies have shown that men are more willing to dominate and show higher levels of demand compared to women, whereas women communicate on a more emotional level. According to Xia’s article “Gender Differences in Using Language,” she found that, “it’s an accepted idea that women are more careful, sensitive and considerate than men. Before a woman talks, she usually thinks the effect her words will cause, so she often appears to be more polite. On the contrary, men appear to be rash, and they just say what they want to say and seldom care what others think, so men’s speech is usually blunt and solid” (1488). This is not to say that women have deliberately shaped language to be more delicate, just like men haven’t purposely shaped language to bring out its harsh side. However, because of the way specific genders speak a certain way, words are associated with solely that sex. Because of this thoroughly established norm, it is very hard to break. Due to language’s biased roles, it often leads to tension. In his article “Gender Differences,” Reiman revealed, “from her observations she noted that women reveal a lot about their private lives in their conversations, stick to one topic for a long time, let all speakers finish their sentences and try to have everyone participate. In contrast, men discussed things other than their personal relationships and feelings, change topics frequently, dominate conversations and establish a hierarchy in communication over time” (n.p). This example really lines up to the works of Xia –women tend to think things out more thoroughly than men, whereas men are more prone to take charge of conversations through not only their word choices, but their actions, as well. Therefore, language is not only depicted through words themselves, but also through the ways it is delivered to the receiver.

As highlighted before, this language-usage barrier can cause a great deal of tension –much of which occurs in the workforce. In his article “Understanding the Relationship between Language and Gender,” Ngoc uncovered that men often focus more on power and control, and will even go to extent of interrupting people to show that keen level of dominance, whereas women are better at building friendships and connecting on a personal level with one another (n.p). With this style of language being depicted throughout the workforce, it can be easy to see how things could get intense. Women should be able to show the same level of dominance, or even exceeding levels that men often show, as men in the workforce. Likewise, in Xai’s article, women are more likely to submit to a man’s control due to his diction and body language than to fight for her rights to power and dominance (1488). Diction and body language plays a huge role in the work force, and it can take a toll on a certain gender’s life. However, females are not the only victims of biased language. Cameron, author of “What Language Barrier,” tells a story in her article about a time a manager of a company was asked why women housed the majority of the employees. The questioner wondered if men even applied for the job because of such low numbers of males working there. After a while, the manager finally admitted that since the jobs primarily consists of building relationships with customers, and having relaxed and open communication skills, he only –if given the choice –hires in women into his business (n.p). Due to women’s continuous associations with friendship building and sympathy levels, the manager merely *assumed* that women were better for the job over men. Men could be just as open-communicative and gentle as women. Nevertheless, it is typically looked down upon because it does not classify under the “manly” category. The only classifications that fit under the “manly” category are those qualifications that associate through common and universally known words, phrases, and specific body languages that are emphasized strictly for males. If genders could see how much more alike they are rather than trying to be the best through word choices and body language, then it would make not only the work force, but people’s everyday lives a lot more easygoing.

On the other hand, language can bring uniformity to the opposite sexes when used in gender-neutral senses. Countless methods fill the world to bring genders together, but it is up to the people to transition out of the linguistic norm. No one says that associating certain words with its opposite intended gender is incorrect. Some researchers even agree that men and women are more alike than they are different, and it is merely language that separates the two.

-insert conclusion-

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